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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nuclear Subs: Keeping Count

Perhaps it's time that Jack Anderson and his associate Dale Van Atta stopped using "secret and top-secret Pentagon and CIA documents" and began using the unclassified published reports. They certainly contain more accurate information than given in Mr. Anderson's column "Falklands War..." [June 12].

Mr. Anderson states that the Pentagon estimates 71 Soviet nuclear-powered submarines are armed with nuclear weapons. Since the Soviet "attack" submarines have the ability to fire nuclear anti-ship missiles and nuclear torpedoes, it is obvious that all 180-plus Soviet nuclear-powered submarines can fire nuclear weapons.

Indeed, at least 16 diesel-powered Soviet cruise missile submarines can also launch nuclear anti-ship missiles. Of course, the old, 1950s-built Soviet Whiskey submarine that ran aground in Swedish waters last November apparently carried nuclear torpedoes. This indicates that perhaps all 375 Soviet submarines of various types, except for a

few target and other specialized craft, can carry nuclear weapons.

Even Mr. Anderson's information on the allies is open to question. For example, certainly the 1,045 allied anti-submarine aircraft do not all carry nuclear depth bombs. Such weapons are not in the Canadian, Norwegian, Dutch and other NATO arsenals.

Actually, the number of U.S. ships and aircraft with a nuclear capability has been declining over the past decade. The new FFG-7 class frigate, which will be the largest class of surface warships in the U.S. Navy, does not even have nuclear capabilities.

The list goes on. The subject of war at sea is an important one for Americans, as is that of nuclear weapons. But we need more accurate reporting and appraisals than Mr. Anderson provides.

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